

Anti-NATO march says 'Defend Bolivarian Venezuela'

By Ted Kelly
Washington, D.C.

Several hundred activists and organizers took to the streets of the U.S. capital on Saturday, March 30, traveling from all over to world to oppose NATO and all imperialist war as military leaders assembled there to mark the 70th anniversary of NATO's formation.

Joining the demonstrators were anti-NATO activists from Greece, Ukraine, Mexico, Argentina, Belgium and Wales. A large contingent of union bus drivers from Boston, equipped with signs and a banner, came for the march, and were represented at the rally by the president of United Steelworkers Local 8751, the Haitian-born Andre François.

William Camacaro, a Venezuelan activist with the Alberto Lovero Bolivarian Circle, recently returned from a visit to his home country. "Any confrontation against Venezuela would be a disaster not only for Venezuelans but also for the entire region: for Colombia, for Brazil, for the Caribbean islands. And that really will create a humanitarian crisis.

"[NATO] has been creating a humanitarian crisis with all these sanctions," said Camacaro. "But we know that the United States, especially this pathological president, probably wants to have a confrontation."

Loan T., co-chair of the No2NATO rally representing the International Action Center, told the activists, "The war has already begun on Venezuela, with economic sanctions and outright media lies attempting to turn the rest of the world against the Bolivarian Revolution. The cycle of war and domination is a twisted game that imperialists play for their endless drive for profit.

"Instead of war, how about reparations for Venezuela? Reparations for Cuba, Puerto Rico, for the Honduran migrants at the border! Reparations for Flint, Michigan! For Black, Brown and Indigenous people facing police brutality and incarceration in this country! Reparations for people around the world resisting the gun of U.S. empire and of the NATO war machine!"

The march worked its way through the streets of the capital, across the new spring grass growing on the National Mall, and through the walkways of cherry blossoms in Lafayette Park across from the White House. It demanded the attention of thousands of tourists and was supported by many workers passing by on their way to jobs.

A few fascist-tourists wearing "Make America Great Again" hats sullenly lurked around the outskirts of the rally, but the anti-NATO demonstration met with no organized resistance by the pro-coup Venezuelan opposition — potentially a sign of flagging morale. Simultaneously, in Caracas, tens of thousands came out in support of the Bolivarian Revolution, despite repeated attacks on the city's electrical grid.



March 30, Washington, D.C.

PHOTO: ALINA DUARTE, TELESUR

Milos Raickovich spoke movingly about the devastation visited upon Yugoslavia and Serbia by NATO in 1999. He recalled the celebrations NATO held in Washington to mark the alliance's 50th anniversary, during the bombing of his country. "They were all celebrating, laughing, with champagne. Even [Polish anti-communist leader] Vaclav Havel. Everything is upside down today."

Raickovich, who recently commemorated the 20th anniversary of the destruction of Yugoslavia in a ceremony in New York City, also expressed heartfelt solidarity with U.S. political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, who writes extensively about the imperialist aggression

in Eastern Europe in the second volume of his new book, "Murder, Inc."

The Minister of Confrontation of the MOVE Organization, Pam Africa, electrified the crowd with her stirring address. Speaking to the need for a broader anti-war, anti-racist coalition of the kind that organized the March 30 mobilization, she said, "I'll work with everybody who's prepared to tear this motherfucker down! As Malcolm said, we must do this by any means necessary.

"The war being waged on Venezuela and around the world," she continued, "is the same war that they

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WW PHOTO: STEVAN KIRSCHBAUM
President Andre François of Boston School Bus Drivers Union, March 30.

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Town meetings expose community health crisis after Houston fire

Part 2

By Mirinda Crissman and Gloria Rubac
Houston

On March 17, a petrochemical fire at Intercontinental Terminals Company's facility in Deer Park, outside Houston, sent thousands of people in the community to the hospital. Read Part 1 at workers.org.

BULLETIN: Another chemical fire exploded April 2, near Houston at the KMCO plant. It has resulted in one death and terrorized plant employees, who had to cut through or climb over fences to escape.

Environmental racism

A town hall meeting was held March 24 at Talento Bilingue de Houston to address East End community concerns about the petrochemical fire. A panel of county and national politicians, local attorneys, Houston's fire chief and a doctor fielded questions. Residents voiced concerns that environmental racism, fueled by profits for petrochemical companies, repeatedly affects people of color in close proximity to oil refineries.

Frustrations with frequent school closings along “borders” of different school districts were also raised. One East End mother Norma Mottu said, “Air has no border.” Concern was expressed for undocumented folks affected who are too afraid to get help.

The meeting centered on the physical effects of the massive, dark, chemical cloud that lingered over the city for three days. Residents described irritated eyes and throats. One noted loss of appetite and vomiting, as well as long wait times at doctors who were checking vital signs without taking blood or urine samples.

Internal medicine practitioner Dr. Rupa Nalam, referencing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), confirmed what many of the residents already knew to be true about the effects of cancer-causing benzene released by the fire. Dr. Nalam said the immediate effects of exposure include drowsiness, dizziness, headaches, irritation of eyes and throat, rapid or irregular heartbeat and

vomiting. Longer-term effects of high exposure include bone marrow damage and leukemia.

Houston-based lawyer Benny Agosto Jr. advised residents to get documentation for their symptoms. He informed people that if they do file a claim directly with ITC, they would be signing away their right to seek compensation in the future.

Houston Fire Chief Samuel Peña explained that Deer Park was outside of Houston’s jurisdiction, but that he was providing resources and aid to the first responders despite massive budget and personnel cuts that the Fire Department is facing. Arbitrary borders and power distributions between governing bodies have already proven inadequate in preventing these man-made disasters from happening, though those on the panel seemed for the most part to be working hard on present responses.

However, when pressed with concerns about water contamination, longterm legislative moves and legal recourse for undocumented people, responses were unsatisfying. One young woman named Kelly questioned Fire Chief Peña about whether the foam used to put out the fire had contaminated the water. She also challenged the Houston Independent School District Board member on the panel, noting, “I do want to remind everybody that (HISD Trustee) Sergio Lira voted twice to privatize four HISD schools. So take whatever he has to say about caring about children with a grain of salt.”

Kelly also voiced concern about the longterm effect of pollutants, given that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has fined less than 10 percent of violations in the city of Houston, home to 4,200 chemical tanks. She also noted that refineries built over 30 years ago were not designed to withstand natural disasters like Hurricane Harvey, which was fueled by climate change.

After the town hall, folks were urged to fill out anonymous health questionnaires to be compiled and presented to the County Commissioners meeting on March 26. Community-based Bayou Action Street Health

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The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans

people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

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Contact a Workers World Party branch near you:

National Office

147 W. 24th St., 2nd floor
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta

PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Austin

austin@workers.org

Boston

284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.522.6626
boston@workers.org

Bay Area

P.O. Box 22947
Oakland, CA 94609
bayarea@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.

335 Richmond Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Charlotte

charlotte@workers.org

Cleveland

P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org

Durham, N.C.

804 Old Fayetteville St.
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

Houston

P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Knoxville, Tenn.

knoxville@workers.org

Minneapolis

minneapolis@workers.org

Pensacola, Fla.

pensacola@workers.org

Portland, Ore.

portland@workers.org

workers.org/wwp

Philadelphia

P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Salt Lake City

801.750.0248
slc@workers.org

San Antonio

sanantonio@workers.org

San Diego

sandiego@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.

tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.

dc@workers.org

West Virginia

WestVirginia@workers.org

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Workers World
147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org



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Editor: Deirdre Griswold

Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell,
Monica Moorehead, Minnie Bruce Pratt;
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Georgia students demand accountability for campus racism

By Arielle Robinson

Student activists at Kennesaw State University in Georgia held a noon protest on March 28 to demand that the KSU administration hold students accountable for racist actions. The protest comes weeks after a KSU student shared a racist screenshot of a Black student on Twitter with the caption, “Need to call the Klan to solve this issue.”

When the targeted Black student complained to the Office of Institutional Equity, an OIE staff person asked him if he thought the racist screenshot was “a joke.”

KSUnited, an activist group dedicated to fighting for the rights of minority students, faculty and staff at KSU, organized the protest. About 50 people attended and more

than 40 people from campus looked on.

Alexa Vaca, KSU political science major and leader of KSUnited, said at the protest: “The administration does nothing to protect us. Their silence speaks volumes as to how much they really care about the safety of students, faculty and staff of marginalized groups. Meanwhile, they boast about the diversity on this campus.” More than 30 percent of KSU students are people of color.

In February, more than a week after the screenshot incident, President Pamela Whitten’s only communication was to send out an email to students on the importance of “diversity.” She also stressed remaining true to two facets of the university’s doctrine, the Owl Creed: “I will always encourage unity by

appreciating the differences in people and their ideas” and “I will always remain faithful to the ideas suggested and deter any behavior that threatens the rights of any KSU member.”

The administration at Kennesaw State University, which has 32,000 students, has not answered specific questions about students who were in racist group chats that featured slurs against Black people and people of the Muslim and Jewish faiths. The administration says this is still an “open investigation.”



WW PHOTO: JIMMY RAYNOR

Kennesaw University students protest racism on campus, March 28.

The March 28 protest featured demands made by KSUnited dating back to 2015. The group is focusing on key issues that include building an anti-racist education center and diversity training for students and faculty. KSUnited members are to meet with President Whitten on April 3. □

WW Commentary

Jussie Smollett and capitalist victim blaming

By Taegan Stross

Charges brought against Black gay actor Jussie Smollett by the city of Chicago were dropped on March 26. But since then, not a day has gone by without his name being vilified by people who wish to see him in jail. Smollett is a star of the Fox network hit series, “Empire.”

Smollett had reported to police that he had been attacked on Jan. 29 near his apartment building in Chicago by two people who yelled racist and homophobic slurs.

Smollett never wavered in asserting the details of the attack. But the Chicago Police Department and the Illinois State Attorney filed felony disorderly conduct charges against him for “filing a false report.” The CPD claimed that Smollett had allegedly staged the attack by hiring two brothers, who were Nigerian, to carry it out.

The criminalization of both Smollett and the Osundairo brothers began when information that the CPD was investigating Smollett was “leaked” to the media on Feb. 14. This accusation took no account of the CPD’s long history of convictions that relied heavily on confessions obtained through CPD torture.

Corporate stations, nearly silent since the attack, then went into a frenzy repeating allegations made by somewhat famous, online fascist personalities and by the white-supremacist torturers of the CPD.

The transparent collaboration of the corporate media and the U.S. “justice” system revealed, once again, how capitalist interests are tied to maintaining and cultivating a system of white-supremacist patriarchy.

The charge against Smollett repeats the historical pattern by racists of “white-washing” their own violence by blaming oppressed people of color. For instance, racists asserted for decades that the multiple Klan bombings of the Black community of Birmingham, Ala., were carried out by Civil Rights activists “for the publicity.”

Corporate media hand-in-hand with racist cops

Less than two weeks after the attack, the New York Post published an article quoting some of Smollett’s neighbors who expressed doubt about the legitimacy of the attack. One man went so far as to say: “It’s a lie because Chicago is the most liberal city around.” (Feb. 11)

To anyone who understands the intense danger of liberalism, his statement is less a defense of Chicago and more an indictment.

Even the liberal “comedians” of late night television joined the side of the

cops. Trevor Noah’s “Daily Show” tweeted a “comedy” skit: “Coming this fall. The story of a poorly staged hate crime that rocked a nation: Jussie’s Lie.”

In the skit, Jaboukie Young-White played the version of Smollett that the CPD and corporate media presented, an actor desperate for attention who stages his own hate crime. Ultimately, Young-White acts the buffoon along with the two men playing the Osundairo brothers. These were assigned a thick “Nigerian” accent — despite the brothers having been born and raised in Chicago.

“Late Show” star Stephen Colbert joined in the “comedy” in his opening monologue, eventually saying: “Smollett cast himself as a fake national symbol for our real racial and political divide.” Then Colbert played a video clip of CPD Superintendent Eddie Johnson claiming: “This stunt was orchestrated by Smollett because he was dissatisfied with his salary.”

Despite these attacks against him, all charges against Smollett were dropped on March 26, leaving the city and capitalist media to shore up their racist defenses. The prosecutor who agreed to drop the case has stated publicly that he does not consider Smollett to be innocent.

An hour after the city dropped charges, and during a police academy graduation ceremony, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and CPD Supt. Eddie Johnson voiced their disdain for the decision, claiming Smollett damaged the city’s reputation. Emanuel said: “This is without a doubt a whitewash of justice, and sends a clear message that if you’re in a position of influence and power, you’ll get treated one way, [while] other people will be treated another way.” (chicagotribune.com, March 26)

The mayor’s analysis of the situation is somewhat correct: If Smollett had been a Black person without the means to hire a lawyer and was instead left to an overworked, hostile, court-appointed defense attorney, he would likely still be in jail. Based on flimsy evidence and the words of the CPD, he would still be facing the danger of the white-supremacist courts of Chicago. For poor and working-class Black and LGBTQ communities of Chicago, the CPD dispenses what they call justice in the form of intimidation, torture and outright murder.

CPD’s history of torture

In a Feb. 21 briefing, Supt. Johnson stated that Smollett “paid \$3,500 to stage this attack and drag Chicago’s reputation in the process.” But the very idea that Smollett or any one person could damage Chicago’s

reputation more than what the Chicago Police Department has done is laughable.

Few people in Chicago have not heard of the “career” of CPD Cmdr. Jon Burge, who guided his officers in the use of cattle prods, suffocation, Russian pistol roulette and beatings to gain confessions from suspects. The late night “comedians” and the corporate media goons are ignoring the fact that only in late 2016 did the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission act on cases of over 200 reports from victims of the CPD. Only until late July 2016 was the Illinois state Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission allowed to act on cases that didn’t involve Burge.

Possibly most shocking was a lawsuit filed by the Guardian newspaper that revealed an off-the-books, CPD-run torture site in Chicago called Homan Square. Between August 2004 and June 2015 at least 7,000 people, of whom nearly 6,000 were Black, were sent to Homan Square to have confessions beaten out of them. (theguardian.com, Oct. 19, 2015)

Despite all this, we’re supposed to trust the word of the CPD in their investigation of a Black man who is openly gay?

This same police force spent 13 months spinning a narrative that Laquan McDonald was “crazed” and attacked the cops who shot him. Then the finally released dashcam video proved his back was turned when CPD cops mercilessly gunned him down. We’re supposed to believe the “justice” system that on Jan. 17 acquitted the three CPD officers who attempted to cover up McDonald’s murder?

The fact that any media outlet would

report claims made by Chicago’s cops without mentioning their vile history is reason enough to find this “free press” guilty of cooperating with the white-supremacist state.

Voice of the white-supremacist state

The campaign against Smollett and all Black and LGBTQ people in the U.S. is not left only to the cops. Our capitalist ruling class has proven that their media outlets serve as the voice of the white-supremacist settler state. These lapdogs eagerly give platforms that cater to the interests of a select few racist billionaires, while actively promoting narratives which further oppression.

Blaming individuals from oppressed communities, as well as political movements of oppressed people, for racist violence is nothing more than victim blaming. All liberation movements struggle against bourgeois state repression and big-business media propaganda, the enabling of hate crimes, structural violence from the U.S. police and military, extralegal violence from sanctioned vigilantes and neofascists, the theft of labor power and any other plan capitalists can devise.

Whether it is the current U.S. attack on Venezuela, the murder of Black activists or any number of other hate crimes in the U.S., we can be sure that the capitalist media will side with and promote narratives that strengthen capitalist hegemony, patriarchy and white supremacy.

Our duty is to resist and to put forward our own powerful narratives of resistance. □

Community meetings expose health crisis after Houston fire

Continued from page 2

offered services, including distribution of shelter-in-place kits and accompanying and advocating for undocumented folks with health-related appointments. The owners and operators of two food trucks fed firefighters before the flames were put out. The gaps left by governing bodies were filled in by community members ready to see ITC held accountable.

The capitalist system of profits over people was the cause of the fire by ITC, a company that has continuously violated laws and the environment. It is up to grassroots people to organize and demand that not only are laws followed, but those corporations which violate the

law, violate our health and violate the environment are penalized or shut down. Mothers shouldn’t live in fear that their children’s health is in constant jeopardy. Kids shouldn’t have to be separated from parents and sent to live with relatives in other cities to avoid pollutants. No one without insurance should have to pay thousands of dollars for health care due to ITC’s negligence.

We need reparations. Everyone in the Houston metro area should be given free doctor’s appointments so they can find out what this disaster has done to their health and then be compensated for all health issues by ITC. If we lived in a just society, that would be a given. □

PHILADELPHIA

Students take over school board meeting

By Philadelphia Workers World bureau

The Philadelphia Board of Education voted 7-2 on March 28 to mandate metal detectors in all city high schools. Angered student activists, teachers and their supporters responded by shutting down the meeting and taking over board members’ seats.

All 49 city high schools now have metal detectors, but three schools — Science Leadership Academy, Science Leadership Academy at Beeber and the Workshop School — do not mandate their use.

SLA Beeber senior Amir Curry stated that metal detectors criminalize students, who do not “view the policy as a safeguard of their health and safety.” Curry is a member of the youth organizing group Philadelphia Student Union which led the

protest.

Naveli Perez, who attends the Academy of Palumbo where detectors are used, said the metal detectors make students feel like “criminals waiting to happen.”

PSU Executive Director Julien Terrell told the board: “We do not recognize your vote! We do recognize your legitimacy!” Terrell, who denounced the board for ignoring student demands, was eventually surrounded by police but not arrested.

When it became clear that the students chanting, “Whose schools? Our schools!” were not stopping, Board President Joyce Wilkerson recessed the meeting, and board members left to reconvene in private.

Members of PSU and the activist teachers’ group, Caucus of Working Educators, then took over the board seats, declaring themselves “The People’s School Board.”

They continued to hear from speakers, many voicing disappointment over the recently elected school board, which had promised to be better than the previous School Reform Commission, target of numerous protests over several years.

Two of the new board members, Angela McIver and Mallory Fix Lopez, opposed the new “security” policy. Lopez pointed out that the metal detectors create distrust among students and negatively impact both mental health and academic achievement. The two student board members, Julia Frank and Alfredo Praticò, also oppose metal detectors but are prohibited from voting.

In private session after leaving the public meeting, the school board voted to adopt a \$3.4 billion 2019-20 budget, despite previous promises to make all



school board business public. Activists with the Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools stated the vote was illegal, in violation of the Sunshine Act guaranteeing public access to board meetings.

Students, teachers and community activists are organizing to address the real problems impacting student health and safety in the schools: lead, mold, asbestos, rodent and insect infestations, contaminated drinking water, plus outdated and broken heating and cooling systems in many buildings. A petition will be delivered to the City Council on April 15 demanding \$170 million for urgently needed repairs, to be obtained by ending a 10-year property tax abatement. □

Seminary students demand reparations

By Betsey Piette

Black students at Princeton Theological Seminary say it’s time for the institution to repent for its reliance on the 19th century slave trade. The Association of Black Seminarians is demanding reparations.

At a March 23 town hall meeting in Princeton, N.J., the ABS demanded that at least 15 percent of the school’s \$1 billion endowment provide scholarships and grants for Black students. They also seek the expansion of the Black Church Studies program and an endowed department chair.

Currently students who identify as African American comprise around 13 percent of the seminary’s 500 students. The 55-member ABS has gathered more than 500 signatures on its petition demanding their proposals be considered by Princeton’s Historical Audit Task Force, which will make formal recommendations to the board of trustees in May.

ABS member Jade Lee observed, “Like the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, it’s about ‘the fierce urgency of now,’ because waiting means never.” (Philly.com, March 26)

In 2016 a committee began to research the seminary’s historic links to slavery. A

report, issued in November 2018, found that roughly 15 percent of contributions to the seminary from 1812 to 1861 came from slaveholders. An additional 15 to 25 percent came from benefactors connected to slavery. Some of the seminary’s founders and first professors benefited directly from enslaved labor while speaking out against slavery at the same time.

Campus buildings are named after three professors—Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller and Charles Hodge—who used slave labor. Slaveholder Richard Stockton donated the land for the school’s first buildings.

More needed than renaming buildings

Princeton Theological Seminary is among dozens of colleges and universities investigating historic ties to slavery. Some of the most prestigious schools in the Northeast were funded in large part through 19th century profits from slavery or the direct use of enslaved workers.

“Shackled Legacy,” a study on how slavery helped build many U.S. colleges and universities, provides detailed information on many of these schools. (tinyurl.com/shackled-legacy) The following are a few examples.

In Massachusetts, the first colony to

legalize slavery in 1641, Harvard University exploited the labor of enslaved Africans to serve the sons of wealthy Southern plantation owners on campus. Early benefactors to Harvard, and also to Brown University in Rhode Island, ran slave ships to Africa and milled cotton on Southern plantations.

Yale University in Connecticut used a small slave plantation in Rhode Island to fund its first graduate programs and scholarships. Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia experimented on corpses of enslaved Africans in scientific studies. Columbia University in New York promoted slave auctions in lower Manhattan to fund its first trustees.

Colleges and universities which have acknowledged historic links to profits from the slave trade include Brown University (2003), the University of Alabama (2004), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2005), University of Virginia (2007), College of William and Mary (2009), Harvard (2011), Emory University (2011), Princeton (2013) and the University of Pennsylvania (2016).

Craig Steven Wilder, author of “Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of American Universities,” writes: “The story of the American college is

largely the story of the rise of the slave economy in the Atlantic world.” Wilder notes, however, that “to date, there is no single accounting of how much money flowed from the slave economy into the coffers of American higher education.”

There has been little restitution beyond apologies, renaming buildings and installing plaques. A study released at Washington and Lee University in 2014 led to militant protests by Black students to remove Confederate battle flags on campus.

Now, ABS members at Princeton Seminary made clear that they are not willing to settle for “superficial” initiatives such as changing building names. They insist that any action be substantive, while realizing they probably won’t directly benefit.

Seminary student Michael Evans Jr. expressed discomfort with the school’s connection to slavery. “My great-grandmother picked cotton, cleaned other people’s houses, and raised other people’s children. Just like my ancestors did things that would benefit us,” Evans said in the Philly.com article. “This may not help me, but it may help people who come behind me. This is for somebody else.” □

Georgia passes most restrictive abortion law

By Dianne Mathiowetz Atlanta

The Georgia legislature succeeded in passing the most restrictive law governing access to abortion in the country on March 29, defying the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision. Its sponsor, Republican Rep. Ed Setzler, claimed that a heartbeat could be detected at six weeks of pregnancy and therefore the state of Georgia was obligated to protect its human life.

The law, coined the "heartbeat bill," criminalizes abortions after six weeks, before in fact most people are even aware they are pregnant. The current legal time-frame for an elective abortion in the state is 20 weeks. Supreme Court decisions have followed the standard of the viability of a fetus outside the womb as the establishment of human life.

Setzler's bill goes much further by allowing a fetus to be declared a legal "dependent" on state tax returns and to be counted in the state's population census. This establishment of an embryo as a person entitled to all constitutional rights

has long been an aim of the anti-abortion movement.

Despite all medical science presented by OB-GYN doctors denouncing the notion that a six-week-old fetus, the size of a fingernail, had a functioning heart that was beating, the Republican, male-dominated Georgia General Assembly determined that the government, not pregnant people in consultation with their families or doctors, would decide their reproductive lives.

The law does provide exemptions if a pregnant person's life is in danger, if the fetus is determined to be nonviable and in cases of rape or incest, but only if a police report is filed.

Hundreds of people of all ages and backgrounds, medical doctors, scientists and business leaders filled the legislative halls and meeting rooms for weeks in an attempt to stop this piece of misogynist interference from passing both chambers of the Assembly.

Dozens of women donned the red cloaks and dresses and the white headpieces worn by the handmaids in the novel “The Handmaid's Tale," which is set in a future authoritarian U.S. society

where women's only role is to produce children. They lined the entrance to the building and the hallways for weeks, an ever-present reminder of the fundamental religious and backward social politics of the legislation.

Women legislators stood and turned their backs when Setzler first introduced the bill in the House. They earned the wrath of the Republican Speaker of the House, who decried their "disrespectful" actions and promised "disciplinary" action.

Advocates for reproductive rights proposed that these elected officials turn their attention to Georgia's woeful position as the leading U.S. state in maternal deaths, with Black women three times more likely to die in childbirth than white women. More than half of Georgia's counties do not even have an OB-GYN practicing medicine there, and 64 counties do not have a pediatrician.

Plus, rural hospitals are closing at an alarming rate because many of their patients lack insurance of any kind. It's predicted that there will be an even greater rise in pregnant people's deaths if a legal, safe abortion cannot be performed

by a doctor. The use of "home" remedies and unlicensed back-alley abortionists, prevalent prior to Roe v. Wade, will once again flourish to meet the needs of poor and working women especially.

On March 29, the final passage was barely secured in the House of Representatives. With 91 yes votes needed, the final count was 92 to 78. Gov. Brian Kemp is guaranteed to sign the bill into law soon, as he had vowed to enact the "most restrictive anti-abortion law" in the country while running for office.

The law will not go into effect until Jan. 1, 2020, and the American Civil Liberties Union and Planned Parenthood have both announced that they will file suit to prevent it. Federal courts have overturned similar "heartbeat" laws in Kentucky, Mississippi and, just this past week, North Carolina.

Generations of women have struggled for the right to control their own bodies, to be able to decide if and when they will choose to have children and with whom or on their own. This fight in Georgia and the nation will not be over until this right is secured for all. □

On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

Adjunct professors win union in Florida

Service Employees' Faculty Forward campaign won a landmark unionization drive March 27 at Miami-Dade College. With more than 2,800 adjuncts voting to unionize, it became the largest adjunct union in the country. In 2017, more than 81 percent of M-DC's professors were adjuncts, averaging only \$22,000 a year with no health care. The education workers are fighting for their lives as the college faces increasing budget cuts. Over the last decade, 13 percent of Florida's higher education budget was cut.

Ximena Barrientos, an adjunct professor of earth sciences, said the union is "saying enough is enough. We're tired of watching our students go to food banks because tuition keeps rising. I'm tired of worrying about bill collectors when I should be worried about lesson plans. By standing up with one voice, we can demand the investment we need for our students and colleagues throughout Florida."

In less than two years in the "right-to-work" (for less) state of Florida, more than 9,000 adjuncts — more than half the adjuncts in the Florida College System! — unionized at four colleges. Now SEIU Faculty Forward is hoping to use the M-DC win to help organize the other three colleges in the system. (paydayreport.com, March 27)

Grad student employees strike at UI Chicago

Graduate student employees at the University of Illinois at Chicago went on strike March 19 after more than a year of contract negotiations. Leaders of the Graduate Employees Organization, representing more than 1,500 workers, voted to strike indefinitely when 99.5 percent of members voted in February.

"Despite being highly educated professionals providing skilled labor for a multi-billion-dollar institution, UIC grad workers live on the edge of poverty," GEO leaders said in a statement. "Grad workers' low pay, high fees, and often precarious employment negatively impacts their academic progress, professional development, and overall health, which only undermines UIC's educational and research mission."

Graduate employees' minimum salary is \$18,065 for two semesters of 20-hour workweeks. They also receive the equivalent of \$13,502 in tuition and fee waivers. While UIC offers an 11.5 percent increase in minimum pay over three years, GEO seeks a 24 percent increase, plus tuition waivers.

"There's nothing left once you make your tuition payment. There's no money for food, rent," said Mari Miller, who studies industrial design. "If I didn't have a partner who makes enough to support me, I wouldn't be able to live." (Chicago Tribune, March 20)

A March 30 geoweb bulletin about the 28th bargaining session reported: "The administration told us they still will not consider waiving, capping, or freezing fees, except to offset the planned \$50-per-semester increase to the General Fee with a matching increase to the campus minimum wage next year only. They also didn't offer us any new proposal on wages or healthcare." (uic-geo.net) La lucha continua!

Ohio education workers strike for fairness

Since March 22, 84 workers represented by the Ohio Association of Public School Employees, AFSCME Local 390, have been walking the picket line for job justice. The diverse mix of teacher's aides, secretaries, bus drivers and cooks have been laboring at Claymont City Schools without a contract for 22 months. (afscme.org, March 27) The school district retaliated by hiring replacement workers — in defiance of a 1967 anti-strikebreaker ordinance — and a security team. The union is still waiting for the board to return to negotiations. (Times Reporter, March 28)

The workers want an annual raise of 3.5 percent retroactive to July 1, 2017, as well as better insurance and job fairness. Local 390 President Jim Maxwell said, "We provide critical services to the students at Claymont City Schools and we should have the decent wages and benefits that reflect that hard work and dedication." Education workers are leading the class struggle today!

Gig drivers strike LA "rideshare" companies

Hundreds of Uber and Lyft drivers in Los Angeles held a 25-hour strike March 25 outside Uber offices in Redondo Beach to protest wage cuts and working conditions, said advocacy group Rideshare Drivers United. Uber's recent announcement of a 25 percent cut in drivers' pay per mile in LA and parts of Orange County triggered the walkout. Drivers for both companies say having to pay to maintain their vehicles makes it difficult to earn enough to live on.

"I'm currently homeless," Sinakhone Keodara, who lives in the car he rents from Lyft, told NBC News. "I don't make enough to get out of my situation, but I can't walk away from Lyft. I'm trapped in an endless cycle." (March 25)

The RDU is calling for minimum pay that matches New York City's new rule: ride-share drivers are paid a \$28-an-hour salary before expenses. (Lyft and Juno are currently challenging that in court.) Drivers also want "the right to organize without retaliation," says RDU.

The strike comes after Uber was recently ordered to pay a \$20 million settlement to California and Massachusetts drivers. One unidentified expert told NBC News that "was actually 'a win' for the company in part because it doesn't have to classify its workers as employees." Keodara answered: "I'm drowning in this gig economy. We should be getting overtime and benefits and at least minimum-wage pay." □

Goodson's family demands subway elevators

By Tony Murphy
New York

Official explanations of major events would have us believe that bad things happen to people at random — tragic incidents of bad luck.

When 22-year-old mother Malaysia Goodson fell to her death down subway stairs in January while carrying her stroller and her baby (the baby survived), the city medical examiner and the New York Police Department claimed that the fall was due to some unexplained "pre-existing medical condition." That was on Jan. 30, two days after the fatal fall. Since then, neither agency has given any details to support this claim.

That explanation was meant to dismiss the fact that the Metropolitan Transit Authority subway station at 53rd Street and 7th Avenue, where Goodson fell to her death, has no elevators. And that the entire New York subway system lacks universal accessibility, with fewer than a quarter of the stations having elevators, which are constantly breaking down.

This dire situation has been highlighted by accessibility advocates for years. In fact, two days after Goodson's fall, wheelchair users and organized advocacy groups protested at the subway station where the death occurred. Media coverage of the protest, however, was dominated by headlines claiming Goodson had a "pre-existing condition."

People with pre-existing conditions of all kinds use public transportation. They should be able to do so without having to navigate dangerous stairs. The use of this phrase also falsely paints the demand for elevators as coming only from people who are mobility impaired. It keeps the issue isolated politically — because it seems like it's coming from just one group, people with disabilities, who face daily oppression and social marginalization.

Since Goodson's death, parents have acted to overcome that false divide. Mothers like Christine Coleman and Christine Yearwood have joined accessibility advocates at MTA board meetings and at courthouse rallies in order to express solidarity with Goodson's family and break the demand for elevators out of political isolation.

On March 27, at the monthly MTA board meeting, Dontaysia Turner — the cousin of Malaysia Goodson and herself a mother — gave testimony that continued that trend in the most powerful way.

"I'm a mother of two," Turner told the board, "so I know the struggle of walking up and down the stairs with a baby and bags and strollers. ... It's not fair. I feel like you guys are raising the price and nothing is being done. I want to know, where is all this money going?"

"We need elevators, if not at every station, at least at every other station. You have people with strollers, babies, pregnant, walkers, wheelchairs, anything you can think of struggling up and down these stairs. It's not right, it's not fair. I feel like you all have to do something fast, quick, before something like this happens again. ... I don't want anyone else's family to feel the pain my family feels."

Turner concluded: "We talk about my cousin every day. She should still be here with us. I shouldn't be here talking on her behalf."

Turner's testimony caused a flurry of local media attention, including the revelation that the MTA has never



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

March 27: Honoring Malaysia Goodson during International Working Women's Month, moments before her cousin powerfully addressed the MTA board demanding full accessibility for public transit.

reached out to the family with any apology or condolences after Goodson's death. Acting MTA chair Frank Ferrer's response — "I'm sorry that it didn't happen. That's regrettable" — rang hollow. Surely MTA lawyers forbid officials from contacting the family because that would imply responsibility and make a justifiable lawsuit easier for the family.

Before Turner spoke at the board meeting, a sidewalk protest gathered outside MTA headquarters. It was called to honor Goodson for International Working Women's Month.

Showing the increasing solidarity among different class forces calling for elevators, the majority of protesters were from the accessibility movement. Mary Kaessinger, a wheelchair user and leader of The People's MTA, opened with: "This is a rally to honor Malaysia Goodson, a woman who fell to her death down the subway stairs. Had there been an elevator, that wouldn't have happened."

International Action Center leader Teresa Gutierrez called attention to the more than \$1 trillion Trump had just approved for the U.S. military: "Let's take the money that exists in this country and use it for elevators. It's a basic human right!"

March 8, International Women's Day, inspired by a march in 1908 and a three-month strike by women immigrant garment workers from 1909 to 1910 in New York City, was officially recognized in August 1910 by European socialists. Lack of safety measures in garment shops was a key issue for these workers. Seven months after IWD was recognized, the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire occurred in NYC, in which 146 garment workers, mostly women, were killed, due to treacherous working conditions and the bosses' blatant disregard for their safety.

IWD takes on heightened meaning today as women workers, especially women of color, and all oppressed people intensify the fight against a society that values profits over people. Over a hundred years later, preventable deaths still occur. On March 28, 25 people were killed in Bangladesh in a high-rise office building with locked emergency exits. Many jumped to their death. This is a recurring problem in areas relying on super-exploitative working conditions to boost capitalist profits, with no provisions for workers' safety.

In the case of the MTA, so much of its money goes to repaying loans from Goldman Sachs and other banks that it never has enough left to actually maintain the system. A December 2017 New York Times article reported that the MTA pays debt service at the rate of \$83 a second.

Most of that money is interest — money banks get for doing nothing. None of it is taxed. The pre-existing condition that may have ultimately killed Malaysia Goodson is capitalism. □

Venezuela today: consolidating people power

Part 1

By Sara Flounders

The following excerpted talk was given at a March 21 Workers World Party meeting in New York.

The U.S. war machine is always scheming and planning. Every country in the world is in its crosshairs. Every gain in sovereignty is a threat to corporate global domination.

Venezuela has accomplished so much to alleviate poverty, advance education and build health care for millions who were ignored by previous U.S.-friendly regimes. These accomplishments make Venezuela a threat and an arch enemy to finance capital.

Venezuela is also the country with the largest oil and gold reserves in the world, along with natural gas, diamonds and iron ore.

It was an incredible honor to participate in the delegation to Venezuela organized by the U.S. Peace Council [March 9-18]. I've been in other countries in the midst of the terror created by U.S. imperialist bombs and seen the impact of strangulating sanctions, a form of war that creates deadly artificial shortages of the most essential supplies.

In Iraq, Lebanon and Gaza, Syria and Yugoslavia — in each place I have seen organized human resistance.

Venezuela seems to be finding some of the most radical solutions to the problems that U.S. imperialism piles on when it is determined to bring a country down. Venezuela is studying past U.S. war scripts and learning and applying tactics that helped other countries that were able to resist.

I returned from this delegation deeply optimistic about Venezuela's future. Resistance in Venezuela means continually seeking collective solutions.

Mobilized people power is a material force

People power, mobilized, has the ability to push back the aggressive hand of U.S. imperialism that is determined to drag the people of the world into another war for oil — a criminal war that will ignite war throughout Latin America.

In Venezuela there are huge demonstrations, all the time. This is first and foremost a political struggle, a class struggle. This has been true for years. Now, every Saturday since the coup attempt on Jan. 23 there have been demonstrations.

There is an ongoing, friendly peoples' occupation in front of the Presidential Palace, which shows determined resistance after the coup attempt. Unions take different days, as do collectivos, the community-based organizations.

The day we joined, the oil workers union was mobilized. The president of the union said, "We are armed, and we will defend what is ours."

An almost two-hour meeting with [Venezuelan President Nicolás] Maduro

was a highlight of the trip. Maduro discussed the attack on the electrical grid, the impact of sanctions and the forms of popular resistance.

One especially forceful point Maduro made was that "the struggle in Latin America has always been between [James] Monroe and [Simón] Bolívar. For 200 years, between U.S. domination and national sovereignty. Now, as even [U.S. President Donald] Trump defines it, it is a global struggle between capitalism and socialism."

Even as we were meeting with him, his phone was receiving threatening and insulting tweets from [U.S. Sen. Marco] Rubio and [U.S. Special Representative for Venezuela Elliott] Abrams. This crude level of petty schoolyard bullying insults is intended as psychological warfare.

Electrical grid attack

Our arrival in Venezuela was delayed because of the U.S.-orchestrated destruction of the electrical grid for the whole country. This made landing the plane hazardous, so the crew waited until daylight. On our arrival Caracas was dark, without traffic lights.

American Airlines, a major carrier out of Caracas, had shut down its flights, so all of them were packed. Some in the delegation arrived late. Other delegations were canceled and postponed. We returned to the U.S. days late.

An attack on the electrical grid means all pumps stop working, so there is no water for drinking, cooking, flushing toilets. It means no elevators, mass transit, gas pumps or credit card transactions. Communications were down in the entire country.

Imperialist forces all but took credit for this war crime against the entire population. Former CIA director and now Secretary of State [Michael] Pompeo tweeted, "No Food, No Medicine, Now No Power, Next No Maduro."

But the total darkness of the power grid did NOT lead to mass rebellions or widespread looting or a breakdown in social cohesion, as expected.

If the lights are out in the U.S., in New York City or Los Angeles, tens of thousands of youth who understand deeply that their lives and futures are stolen by this system will seize the opportunity to take a fraction of what is taken from them.

In Venezuela it was overwhelmingly orderly during the five to seven days, as power winked on and off. There were lines for water and emergency supplies. Schools and workplaces were closed because the metro and buses couldn't run.

It was a total failure of the U.S. effort to galvanize public unrest, just as the phony "humanitarian delivery" of food and supplies on Feb. 23 utterly failed to split the Venezuelan military or break open Venezuelan borders to U.S. intervention.

There were huge rallies at every border crossing in the country. The people rallied

and mobilized.

The Venezuelan military is backed up by a people's militia of over 2 million organized into 50,000 units. These local defense committees, officially called "Committees for Security and Integral Defense," are based in the Community Councils. They connect the armed forces to the desires and needs of the most politically active sector of the population.

As President Maduro explained, U.S. imperialism is to blame for cyber attacks from Houston against the main center [of the electrical grid], as well as explosions at substations and high-tech attacks using electromagnetic waves. The U.S. is to blame in other ways. For years they have intentionally denied equipment and parts needed to upgrade systems.

Even Forbes magazine published a report on March 9 that detailed exactly how the U.S. could carry out such an attack. The author discusses the concept of a "cyber first strike," in which "governments would increasingly turn to cyberwarfare either on its own or as part of hybrid warfare to weaken an adversary prior to conventional invasion or to forcibly and deniably effect a transition in a foreign government.

"In the case of Venezuela," the article continues, "the idea of a government like the United States remotely interfering with its power grid is actually quite realistic. ... It is likely that the U.S. already maintains a deep presence within the country's national infrastructure grid, making it relatively straightforward to interfere with grid operations. ... Widespread power and connectivity outages like the one Venezuela experienced last week are also straight from the modern cyber playbook."

Sanctions, coups and covert actions

The Bolivarian Revolution is finding creative solutions to how to survive U.S. sanctions that have strangled every part of the economy, led to 3,000 percent hyperinflation, and created financial chaos and shortages of essential goods. It has done so while contending with assassinations, provocations and then an outright coup attempt.

The outrageous declaration by an

insignificant, low-level, extremely right-wing politician Juan Guaidó that he was president of Venezuela would be laughable, except that the U.S., all of its imperialist allies in NATO and then dependent countries, totaling 53 of the 193 countries in the U.N., immediately recognized this unknown, unelected politician. There was no election, no law! Just U.S. imperial arrogance.

The U.S. has handed \$11 billion worth of the assets of Venezuela's national state-owned oil company and the country's biggest foreign asset, CITGO, directly to Guaidó.

CITGO owns four petroleum terminals, three oil refineries and 5,000 gas stations in the U.S.

U.S. declared sanctions on Venezuela include:

- All of Venezuela's oil
- Blocking of its banking services and all credit cards
- U.S. edicts that prevent the government from even using its gold reserves
- Confiscation of billions of dollars Venezuela held abroad
- Confiscation of CITGO
- Cutoff of all food supplies, seed, pesticides, fertilizers, spare parts, equipment and essential medicines.

All of these criminal acts restrict the ability of the Venezuelan government to satisfy even the most basic needs [of the population]. This is why the opposition and the U.S. media predicted shortages, hunger and riots.

The most sinister forms of covert war are in the planning stages, with Secretary of State Pompeo's announcement of the appointment of Elliott Abrams as Special Envoy for Venezuela.

Abrams organized bloody rightwing coups, death squads and mercenaries in Central America in the 1980s for the [Ronald] Reagan administration and was a key architect of the Iraq War.

Abrams, Pompeo, Rubio and of course Trump openly threaten mass destruction.

Next: Urban agriculture, community councils and housing.

Anti-NATO march

Continued from page 1

are waging right here. In order to fight for Venezuela, we must stand up and destroy these motherfuckers here [who perpetrate] the beatings, the bombings, the jailings of our people."

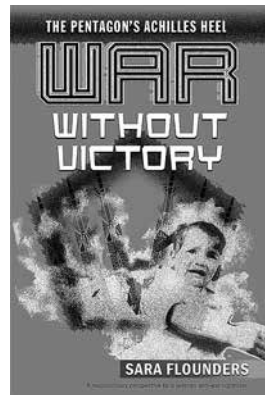
The march and rally were covered extensively by teleSUR, Russia Today and many independent journalists. Livestream coverage on the WWP Facebook page reached the feeds of more than 29,000 people. Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs Jorge Arreaza posted coverage of the No2NATO mobilization on Twitter, as did President Nicolás Maduro himself, sharing videos of the demonstration and rally to his 3.9 million followers.

The No2NATO mobilization continues for the duration of the NATO summit, culminating in an event hosted by the Black Alliance for Peace on April 4. A full schedule of events can be found at No2NATO2019.org, nowaronvenezuela.org and blackallianceforpeace.com.

The weekend's march and rally were

called by the No2NATO2019 coalition. It is comprised of many organizations, including Workers World Party, Black Alliance for Peace, International Action Center, United National Antiwar Coalition, Code Pink, Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, U.S. Peace Council, Virginia Defenders, Popular Resistance, Movement Against War and Occupation from Vancouver, Freedom Road Socialist Organization, Students for a Democratic Society, December 12 Coalition NYC, BAYAN, International League of Peoples Struggle, Black Is Back Coalition, Veterans For Peace, World Beyond War, Coalition Against U.S./NATO Foreign Bases, NJ Antiwar Agenda, MOVE Organization, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and the No War On Venezuela campaign.

This demonstration of activists from all across the progressive political map shows that the anti-war movement, long dormant in this country, is now undergoing a tectonic revival that will shake the empire to its very foundations. □



WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

"By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to stand up to the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity."

– Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009;
Foreign Minister of Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

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BRAZIL

Workers protest attacks on pensions

By Kathy Durkin

Some 10,000 teachers gathered at Republic Square in São Paulo, Brazil, to march with other workers and students on the “National Day of Struggle in Defense of Social Security” on March 22. Demonstrations were held in 126 cities throughout Brazil in this massive coordinated protest — an “act of resistance” to the war on workers’ rights, especially their pension benefits, being waged by reactionary President Jair Bolsonaro.

Ten major labor unions, the Brazilian Peoples Front and People Without Fear Front organized the national day of action. Workers carried signs that read, “We have to work until we die.” Protesters occupied streets and public places to denounce the administration’s assaults on their hard-won benefits.

Bolsonaro, a neofascist and ally of the super-rich, has already lowered the minimum wage and weakened labor law

enforcement. He closed the Ministry of Labor. The Finance Ministry is now in charge of pensions, workplace oversight, health and safety, and workers’ salaries.

In February, Bolsonaro submitted a proposal to Congress to amend the Constitution that would slowly dismantle the social security, social protection and retirement systems, eventually leading to their demise. If passed, this amendment would severely harm workers, retirees, people with disabilities and the poor. It would lead to privatization of workers’ pensions and retirement and social security funds. These funds would be held by private banks, which would then have multibillion dollar funds to manage. But the proposal would benefit Bolsonaro’s cronies and allies — members of the military and the wealthy.

Ubiraci Dantas Oliveira, chairperson of the General Workers’ Center (CGTB), stressed: “They want to turn everything over to the banks. Employees would have



PHOTO: BRASIL DE FATO

Union members join 'National Day of Struggle in Defense of Social Security,' March 22.

to pay [contributions] by themselves and employers and the government would not pitch in anymore. It would be all on workers’ shoulders.” (Brasil de Fato, March 22)

Mass protests against Bolsonaro’s attacks on unions and workers occurred on Feb. 20 in 12 cities and on March 8,

International Women’s Day. Unions are mobilizing to stop the undoing of pension benefits, and their leaders say workers’ outrage at this attack will lead to a general strike to stop the implementation of this plan to make the rich richer and the workers poorer. □

VENEZUELA

Legal actions begin against coup plotters

By Sam Ordóñez

March 31—Juan Guaidó, president of the National Assembly—which is operating in contempt of the Supreme Court—and self-proclaimed interim president of Venezuela, has been barred from holding public office for 15 years. This decision came as a result of an investigation into undeclared travel and lodging expenses, following the process established by the Law Against Corruption.

According to the comptroller general, the total amount spent on trips outside of the country, mainly to Panamá, was over 310 million bolivares, which is approximately \$100,000. These expenditures, particularly when considered along with money spent on hotels inside and outside the country, is unreasonably high given the salary of a National Assembly deputy. Guaidó has refused the request to present legal documentation of his sources of income, which has led officials to suspect that he has illegally accepted funds from foreign governments. (tinyurl.com/yxwku2ef)

This is the second legal action taken directly against Guaidó for his role in the attempted coup. The first was a travel ban, which Guaidó violated by crossing the border into Colombia several days before Feb. 23.

On that day, the right-wing coup plotters tried to break the Bolivarian National

Armed Forces and bring U.S. trucks over the Colombian border. This assault was stopped. Now, the legal investigations that were opened at the start of the coup are concluding. The coup plotters can expect to face constitutionally appropriate punishments.

The resistance of the Venezuelan people and the unity between the military and civil society have managed to foil imperialism’s plans for now, causing the U.S. to resort to sabotage and an economic blockade. During the month of March, the Venezuelan government denounced several attacks against the country’s electrical grid. These attacks, which have taken digital, physical and high-technology forms, resulted in several power outages during the month.

Dictatorship vs. ‘democracy’

The informational attacks against Venezuela, carried out by imperialist-aligned media such as CNN, New York Times, Fox and others, have been a defining feature of imperialist regime-change efforts. These corporate news outlets have manufactured the narrative that dominates in the imperialist countries. According to them, Bolivarian Venezuela is an oppressive and corrupt dictatorship.

These same outlets are characterizing the actions taken against Juan Guaidó as yet another dictatorial abuse of power. The truth is that the Venezuelan

government has gone to great lengths to ensure that even citizens involved in an attempted coup have their democratic and constitutional rights respected.

One has to first review the facts, which are easily lost when the imperialist narrative is being pushed from all angles. Juan Guaidó was, constitutionally, the president of the Venezuelan National Assembly. That National Assembly has been in contempt of the Venezuelan Supreme Court since March 29, 2017.

On Jan. 23, Juan Guaidó swore himself in as “interim president” of Venezuela in a public square. U.S. President Donald Trump almost immediately recognized him. Then, the self-proclaimed president stated his intent to bring trucks into Venezuela supplied by a U.S. state agency without permission from any legitimate Venezuelan institution.

On Feb. 23, Guaidó and other opposition officials led a series of violent attacks from Colombia against the border. On the other side of the bridge, Venezuelan state forces and the pro-government “collectivos” — organized community groups — prevented any major incident. In the end, as the New York Times was later forced to admit, the opposition burned its own trucks and tried to blame that on Bolivarian forces.

How is a democratic and sovereign country to respond to an open attempt to overthrow the government? These

are acts of high treason, and to make matters worse, the coup plotters are not just looking for personal gain. They are openly working with U.S. imperialism to sell the country to North American business interests.

The Venezuelan justice system has responded by opening a series of investigations into concrete crimes, gathering evidence over the course of several months. The Venezuelan constitution guarantees the rights of all citizens, even the ones carrying out a coup d’état.

On the other hand, in the Latin American countries that imperialism labels as “democracies,” leaders of social movements are regularly murdered just for voicing opposition to neoliberal policies. For example, Colombia registered 120 deaths of social movement leaders in the first 100 days of President Ivan Duque’s term. (tinyurl.com/ya6mq5q)

The total number of leaders murdered in 2018, according to the Colombian Office of the Ombudsman, is 172. That same office also noted that the number of deaths had noticeably risen since the Peace Accords were signed. (tinyurl.com/y3ar8csp)

In the U.S., children are placed in concentration camps just because their parents crossed the border, and Black communities have been criminalized and regularly experience police brutality. □

Vietnam vet reports back from Venezuela

By Lyn Neeley
Portland, Ore.

A March 30 reportback organized by Portland’s Hands Off Venezuela PDX group featured Dan Shea, a member of Portland’s Veterans For Peace. Shea was one of a dozen anti-war leaders who traveled to Venezuela as part of a solidarity delegation sponsored by the U.S. Peace Council. Candy Herrera, a worker for an education union and a member of Hands Off Venezuela PDX, was the chair and emcee for the meeting.

Shea said the delegation arrived in Venezuela during a power outage, an act of sabotage caused by electrical hackers working with the U.S.-backed opposition. He said that half the country suffered from no electricity for more than a week. Elevators in apartment buildings had stopped, putting elderly and disabled

people especially at risk.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro told the delegation that the outage was meant to cause riots and turn people against the Bolivarian government. But the subversion backfired. Maduro turned the situation around by declaring a national holiday and telling people they didn’t have to go to work. Shea said he had “great respect for the Venezuelan people, because they work together and became even more united against imperialist infiltration.”

Shea was exposed in Vietnam to Agent Orange, the deadly herbicide and defoliant sprayed across the jungles by the U.S. military. Afterwards, his son Casey was born with congenital heart disease and a cleft palate, and was given to seizures. Casey went into a coma after 10-hour heart surgery that eventually caused his death.

Shea said that his story is just one of millions. During the Vietnam War,

4 million Vietnamese people and 2.8 million U.S. troops were exposed to dioxin, the carcinogenic ingredient in Agent Orange. It has had a deadly impact on generations of Vietnamese people and the GIs who served in Vietnam. More than 50 years later, lives are still being lost due to horrific health issues and chemically induced genetic mutations.

Just as the delegation was preparing to leave Venezuela, American Airlines suspended flights to Venezuela. The pilots’ union said “conditions were too dangerous” in the country. During their five-day delay, Maduro arranged for a public meeting with the delegation.

At the meeting, Shea presented Maduro with a gift: his Veterans For Peace dog tag which reads, “Dedicated to ending war.” Maduro immediately put the tag on and announced the gift publicly and online in tweets.



Dan Shea.

PHOTO: DAN SHEA

Shea’s final message was that people have to organize, organize, organize to end the sanctions, sabotage, lies and propaganda issued by the U.S. against Venezuela. □

Millions of Algerians demand corrupt leaders go

By G. Dunkel

April 1 — Rumors published on Algerian TV today indicated that President Abdelaziz Bouteflika intends to resign April 2, after a month of protests, culminating with a demonstration of millions on March 29. Demonstrations to change the system in Algeria began Feb. 22, when thousands of people, mainly youth, came into the streets throughout the country after Bouteflika announced he intended to seek a fifth term.

The youth were protesting corruption; the dilapidation and mismanagement of Algeria's economy, which is completely tied to its production of oil and natural gas; and the unemployment of youth, officially at 26.4 percent. Youth make up two-thirds of the country's population.

Bouteflika had a serious stroke in 2013 and hasn't spoken in public since then.

After two more Friday protests, each growing progressively larger and involving broader sectors, Bouteflika announced that he would not run for a fifth term. At the same time, he postponed the elections.

The irony of this maneuver was expressed in popular opinion: "We protested for elections without Bouteflika and got Bouteflika without an election."

The Friday demonstration after this announcement on March 15 was the largest yet. The people smelled a trap in Bouteflika's announcement and avoided it.

All progressive organizations in Algeria support these protests, which appear to have been called using social media with input from the unions, which are not part of

the official power structure. The demonstrations held on Fridays, the first day of the weekend, have been the biggest and broadest. During the week various constituencies — teachers, students, lawyers, judges, health workers, doctors and especially workers — have also held protests.

Two significant events took place the week leading up to the March 29 demonstration. On March 27, Gen. Ahmed Gaïd Salah, the head of the army, made a request to the Constitutional Council, under Article 102 of the Algerian constitution, that it declare Bouteflika unfit to hold office. The army's position on this has been interpreted as an attempted putsch, especially since up to now Salah had been a supporter of Bouteflika.

Meanwhile, a three-day partial general strike was called anonymously on social networks for March 26. The strike involved gas and oil production, port and railroad workers, airport workers and custom inspectors. (observ-algerie.com, March 24) These targets were carefully chosen because they have a major impact on the Algerian economy, yet avoid inconveniencing most Algerians.

Salah's tactic of separating out Bouteflika did not calm or decrease the protests at all. Well over a million people came out in Algiers on March 29, by every estimate. An Algerian retiree explained to the March 29 French newspaper Le Monde that everybody except the "bed-ridden, nursing infants, the sick, came out. At least 20 million people."

Homemade signs in the Algiers protest focused on Salah and the dangers of an army intervention: "Gaïd Salah, go take advantage of a well-earned rest. Retire for

the love of God." "Gaïd Salah, the people want democracy, not a military regime!" "We don't want an 'Al-Sissi' [the Egyptian army leader] in Algeria, the Egyptian scenario will not be reproduced here."

An encouraging sign in that protest was the display of the Amazigh flag along with the national Algerian flag. The Amazigh, also known as Berbers, are the Indigenous people of North Africa, who make up between 30 to 40 percent of the population. (tsa-algerie.com, March 29)

Islamist groups, which were decisively defeated in the 1990s' civil war, were "timid" at the beginning of the protests in February and didn't jump into them. They have been mainly active on the outskirts of Algiers, according to ObservAlgerie, an Algerian news site. They promote sharia law and the will of God, rather than democracy and the will of the people.

There are signs that the current Algerian ruling class — a shadowy group of army officers, politicians, wealthy businesspeople and entrepreneurs — are desperately maneuvering to gain control of the situation. A new prime minister and cabinet was announced March 31. A leader of the Business Forum and a major entrepreneur, Ali Haddad, was arrested near the Tunisian border the same day. He is one of the most prominent, longtime Bouteflika supporters.

The Algerian masses are trying to change the system. They appear to be aware of some of the dangers they face, particularly their lack of organization. Workers, through their unions, are becoming more and more involved. □

Due to Cyclone Idai, global warming

Humanitarian crisis grows in Mozambique

By Monica Moorehead

March 30 — Tropical Cyclone Idai hit the southeastern portion of Africa very hard, especially certain regions of Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe March 14-15. A cyclone is the same as a hurricane, which usually refers to monstrous storms in the Atlantic and Northeast Pacific. The word cyclone is mainly used for storms in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean.

According to a March 26 reliefweb.int report, at least 3 million people have been impacted by Idai's winds of up to 150 miles an hour and torrential rain, causing many to flee their homelands for higher ground. An estimated 600 people have died, almost 500 in Mozambique alone, and thousands more are missing. More than 470,000 hectares of crops have been destroyed in these mainly agricultural countries — well over a million acres. (Two and a half acres roughly equal one hectare.)

The coastal city of Beira in Mozambique became the epicenter of the cyclone. Beira, home to 500,000 residents, has been in the forefront of the fight against global warming because its coastline is considered by "experts" to be one of the world's most vulnerable to rising waters due to climate change. According to the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, a group linked to the World Bank and the United Nations, "Mozambique is the third most at-risk country in Africa when it comes to extreme weather." (bbc.com, March 15)

The World Bank approved a project in 2012 to help Beira deal with coastal flooding, since most of the people there live below sea level. The project, completed in 2018 at a cost of \$120 million, did not stop Cyclone Idai from carrying out complete devastation.

While the mayor of Beira, Daviz Simango, blamed the Mozambican government and other African governments for not preparing the population for the cyclone, he also called it "unjust that African nations face some of the toughest challenges while contributing little to global warming. People in rich, industrialized nations produce much of the carbon dioxide and other gases that are warming the planet by burning the most coal, diesel, gasoline and jet fuel. ... This cyclone destroyed everything we built for more than 100 years." (AP, March 27)

Beginning with European invasions, colonialism and neocolonialism have resulted in Africa today being the most underdeveloped continent, but still the richest due to its mineral wealth. Mozambique is a former colony of Portugal.

It is of little wonder that even with all the efforts taken to strengthen Beira's infrastructure, it still wasn't enough to withstand the cyclone.

As a result, a new epidemic of cholera, a preventable

disease, has broken out there due to severe damage to the water supply system by flooding, according to Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

Gert Verdonck, MSF's emergency coordinator in Beira, stated, "The cyclone has left a path of devastation with thousands of houses destroyed, which has left the community vulnerable and exposed to the elements. The supply chain has been broken, creating food, clean water, and health care shortages. The scale of extreme damage will likely lead to a dramatic increase of waterborne diseases, skin infections, respiratory tract infections, and malaria in the coming days and weeks. Furthermore, the local health system and its regular services, such as HIV treatment and maternal health care, has also been disrupted." (doctorswithoutborders.org, March 26)

This crisis is a reminder of the just demand for reparations for the African people from the rich capitalist countries whose genocidal policies have stolen their wealth and labor for centuries. □

From Bush Sr. to Trump

Pentagon uses, abuses Somalia

By John Catalinotto

In a report released March 20, Amnesty International (amnesty.org) made the following three points about U.S. military intervention in Somalia, in the part of northeast Africa known as the Horn:

1. Forensic investigation yields credible evidence that 14 civilians were killed in just five strikes.
2. There have been more than 100 strikes by U.S. drones and piloted aircraft since early 2017.
3. Strikes in Somalia tripled under Donald Trump, outpacing strikes in Yemen and Libya combined.

"In the incidents presented in this report, civilians were killed and injured in attacks that may have violated international humanitarian law and could, in some cases, constitute war crimes," the report said. The attacks take place under the U.S. Africa Command, or Africom, which stations more than 7,000 U.S. troops at bases throughout Africa.

While U.S. strikes have escalated, U.S. intervention in the Horn of Africa is nothing new. It has taken place for decades under both Democratic and Republican administrations under different pretexts. The pretexts are a cover for U.S. imperialism's geostrategic and economic interests in the region.



PHOTO: THEMBA HADEBE, AP

Stranded family, Beira, Mozambique, March 24.

Ogaden War of 1977-78

In 1977, under President Jimmy Carter, the U.S. aimed to counter a revolutionary, pro-socialist government that had seized power in Ethiopia and begun to align with the Soviet Union and other members of what was then the socialist camp. Somalia, which borders Ethiopia, claimed land in the Ogaden region, which had some ethnic Somali population. Carter armed Somalia to provoke a war against Ethiopia, claiming this was to defend self-determination.

After the failure of attempts by Cuba's Fidel Castro to bring the leaders of Somalia and Ethiopia together to avert war, Somalia invaded. The USSR, Cuba and the German Democratic Republic aided Ethiopia, which defeated the Somali Army. The government of Somalia fled the country later in 1991, leaving no central state power in charge.

In the same period, concurrent with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the revolutionary Ethiopian government was overthrown by a pro-U.S. grouping.

'Black Hawk Down' — 1993

Under the George H.W. Bush administration, the U.S. military intervened in Somalia in 1992, this time claiming it was a humanitarian mission — to feed starving

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MEXICO

Rising worker militancy at the border

By Teresa Gutierrez

Many a scholar has written about the phenomenon of rising expectations. What is happening in Mexico today should be examined from that point of view.

Tens of thousands of Mexican workers have gone on strike in unprecedented actions over the last few months, most of them at the border with the U.S. — the same border where President Trump wants to build his hated wall.

The workers' struggle takes place in the context of the significant Mexican presidential election of progressive Andrés Manuel López Obrador in 2018.

Rising expectations?

"Rising expectations" scholars vary in political orientation.

In one right-wing view, Wendy McElroy says, "Starving peasants storm the Bastille because oppression has driven them beyond the limits. It is the quintessential image of political revolution. But what if it is wrong?"

McElroy goes on: "Tocqueville, whose ... (parents) were imprisoned and nearly executed in the French Revolution, commented ... that most histories of that revolution dwell upon the hideous deprivations of the French peasants. ... But Tocqueville noted something odd. The strongest revolutionary sentiment was found ... where prosperity had been growing. People for whom the bonds of servitude had recently loosened were the loudest voices for change."

"Karl Marx," McElroy erroneously continues, "believed that worsening conditions drove the engine of revolt." She disagrees and concludes, "Revolution comes from hope ... it comes when the forces of freedom offer people a glimpse of something better. Violent revolt is the result of despair and rage." (Future of Freedom Foundation, May 1, 2016)

In fact, revolutions, whether they rise from "hope" or are "violent," would be better than what most people face today.

Mexican workers on the rise

Workers and oppressed nationalities in Mexico have experienced it all. They have endured conditions that most people in the U.S. could never imagine. Beheadings. Tens of thousands of political assassinations. Thousands of missing children and families. Inadequate housing, water and employment. Drug cartels almost as powerful as the government.

The government has historically been so corrupt that most people assume each major election will be fraudulent.

But Mexicans continue to challenge the status quo. Protest marches take place daily across the country. In some Indigenous regions especially, the masses



PHOTO: DEARKITTY1.WORDPRESS.COM

Grupo Schumex workers on strike in February outside their Matamoros electrical company plant, with a sign demanding a 20 percent pay raise.

have won people's power and obtained almost full control of their communities.

In 1988 the masses supported a progressive presidential candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cardenas. Despite millions backing him in the streets and in the polls, his victory was stolen.

Mexico has also produced Indigenous armed guerrilla organizations, the most well known being the EZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Army). Formed in 1994, the EZLN is thriving to this day in the state of Chiapas.

All this takes place in the context of U.S. imperialism treating Mexico as its junior partner in crime. Washington has benefited from the drug industry and spent billions to militarize the country. It will do anything to stop any Bolivarian-type revolution at its southern border.

Because of U.S. policies, more than 250,000 people have been killed and around 40,000 have gone missing in Mexico since 2006.

Nonetheless, despite harsh conditions brought on by imperialism, Mexico remains a beautiful, culturally rich and vibrant society.

The will of the workers

In June 2018 progressive candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador won the presidential election. It was a stunning victory given that he had tried before and that all recent progressive candidates had had elections stolen from them.

Obrador, known as AMLO, was greeted by hundreds of thousands of people in the streets on the day of his inauguration. Around the world, and especially in Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua, the progressive political movement was elated that AMLO had won.

And not only were the political movements of Latin America elated, but the masses also had rising expectations.

Immediately López Obrador carried out a gutsy action. He stopped a major renovation of an airport that people had been struggling against for years. AMLO showed support for the struggle and not for the multinational corporations that

wanted an "improved" airport.

He did not move into "Los Pinos," the Mexican equivalent of the White House, and instead opened it to the public so that they could see how former presidents had lived a luxurious life. He opted to stay in his own home.

AMLO attempted to deal in a thoughtful way with the tens of thousands of Central American migrants who made their way to the U.S. through Mexico. He condemned the right-wing, Trump-like vitriol of elite Mexicans who attacked the migrants. He continues to consider options best for the refugees, including one-year temporary status in Mexico that allows them to work there.

AMLO is not a revolutionary socialist, but he opposes U.S. intervention in Venezuela—a hugely independent position to take. Not every one of his actions has been progressive as AMLO remains trapped in a capitalist system overshadowed by U.S. imperialism. But expectations of him remain high among the Mexican people.

Strikes at the border

It is in this context that the struggle of a large number of Mexican workers has burst onto the scene. Since January, a whopping 45,000 workers have gone out on strike or held major work stoppages at the U.S. border.

Their targets have been the maquila companies. There are thousands of production and assembly plants, most on the U.S.-Mexican border, that employ and exploit hundreds of thousands of low-wage workers. Most of these factories are owned by U.S. corporations and subcontractors, including Levi Strauss, Ford, General Motors and Nike.

Maquiladoras have long been targets of struggle on both sides of the border and have historically received much support and solidarity from union and other activists in the U.S. Maquila plants across the border from El Paso in Ciudad Juarez are also infamous for the thousands of maquiladora women workers who have been slaughtered or have gone missing over the years, for whom international solidarity campaigns have been organized.

According to a Jan. 28 article on the website "In Defense of Marxism" by Carlos Marquez: "On 25 January, 48 'maquila' companies in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, were hit by strikes." Matamoros is on the border with Brownsville, Texas, one of the areas where Trump wants to build his wall.

Marquez continues: "This is not minor, we're talking about 45,000 striking workers. In the past several days, the workers revolted against their inert labor leaders and bosses. The workers partially paralyzed some factories. Under pressure, several people went to work, but most refused. Massive, daily assemblies were held in the public square."

Some of the first Mexican maquiladoras were built in Matamoros, the center of today's struggle. That's a great example of the famous statement by Malcolm X about

"chickens coming home to roost" as the result of exploitative and violent actions.

Organizing at 'unprecedented rate'

Workers are organizing at an "unprecedented rate" along the very border where white-supremacist Trump wants to build a wall.

Marquez details both the trajectory and the lessons of this current workers' struggle. He talks about the role of leadership from both community support and the factories, as union leaders and their lawyers have received death threats.

A March 28 Vox article confirms that the struggle which burst out in January continues: "Hundreds of Coca-Cola workers are camping out at a major bottling plant until they get a raise. More than 8,000 Walmart employees were prepared to walk off the job until management meets some of their demands. And 30,000 striking factory workers have finally returned to work after a month-long strike."

The main issue in the struggle is wages. In one factory, initially, the Polytech workers rejected the offer of a 15 percent increase and a \$18,000 bonus. The workers generally earn about \$2.50 an hour; that's the reason U.S. companies move factories there.

The campaign has pushed the idea that workers at each factory should not negotiate alone but as a group — an advanced and exciting tactic. The campaign has been so successful it has sparked the "20/32 Movement" referring to the demand for a 20 percent pay raise and a 32,000 peso annual bonus, about \$1,600.

At least 14 factories have conceded to the demands of the workers. This is a huge victory that neither police harassment nor death threats were able to prevent.

The workers' movement is not just angry at the corporations, but also at the union leadership, which historically has pushed sell-out, pro-corporate unions called "charros."

An article from the Socialist Left makes this point: "In ... Matamoros, an important step has been taken to break [the old repressive] structures; the next step will be the struggle for the democratization of the unions." (tinyurl.com/yy7f3mjje)

Wages will continue to be a big issue: "In 40 years, the purchasing power of workers' wages has fallen by more than 80 percent. AMLO has finally decreed an increase that is estimated above inflation, and a doubling of the minimum wage in the north of the country. This is very limited ... but it is still a small step forward. It was AMLO's decree that encouraged these workers, who mostly identify with the new government, to fight."

Will there be a socialist 'Fourth Transformation'?

One of the campaign platforms that AMLO ran on was the "Fourth Transformation of the Country." This referred to three momentous events that have taken place in Mexico: The War of Independence from Spain, 1810-21; the Benito Juárez reform period of 1857-72; and the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17.

To match that would indeed be a tall order. But the fact that rising expectations have continued to rise at the controversial border indicates great change.

A "Fourth Transformation," which is a socialist turn in Mexico, would be a game changer of the highest order.

The people of Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua would greatly benefit from a historic shift to the left in Mexico.

The movement in the U.S. should do everything to show its solidarity with Mexico. We should demand: No Wall! No more U.S. interference in Mexico! □

Pentagon uses, abuses Somalia

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Somalis. The occupation continued under Bill Clinton, still with the "humanitarian" pretext, until a helicopter was shot down in Mogadishu, the capital, and U.S. troops were killed. The U.S. left in 1994.

Most people will know this only from a chauvinist movie, "Black Hawk Down," whose only virtue is that it keeps the knowledge of this criminal U.S. intervention alive, if distorted. The truth was that U.S. air strikes killed 50 Somali elders who were holding a meeting. The murders made the population furious against the U.S. and led to the deaths of many U.S. troops.

Ethiopian troops, led by a pro-Western

government, invaded unstable Somalia in 2006. Ethiopian, Kenyan and other African troops have operated in the country with U.S. air support to back up a weak Somali regime in Mogadishu.

The current pretext for U.S. intervention is allegedly to confront "terrorism." The main organization fighting the Mogadishu government is called "Al Shabab" (The Youth), although the U.S. claims the Islamic State group (IS) forces also operate there.

Thus, over the course of the last 42 years, Washington has used three different pretexts to try to justify the war crimes committed by U.S. military forces against the Somali people. □

Trans lives, revolutionary lives

Here's to Trans Visibility Day! It was held on March 31. Maybe you didn't know it happened?

It's not a day that's going to be very "visible" on big business media.

Because this day is organized by and for trans people speaking for themselves and their own lives, telling the world how they define themselves and celebrating the complex realities of trans lives.

The corporate media have obsessively presented trans lives as a circus for sweeps-week or narrated trans people as political footballs being kicked back and forth during rightwing attacks.

Instead, it is trans people who have insisted on this truth: They have been part of the fabric of human existence from the beginning of our species.

As trans comrade Gery Armsby commented on Facebook on Trans Visibility Day: "Throughout history human societies have 'assigned' socio-economic roles to people in myriad ways that we today understand as 'gender.' As all societies are subject to constant internal and external forces of change, it is reasonable to understand how gender roles are not now and never have been static, let alone binary. [Gender roles] certainly have

little if anything to do with actual human biology. This is nothing new."

In fact, in matrilineal preclass societies, before the rise of class patriarchy, it was the societal norm to have sex and gender complexity that might be called "trans" now. The many different varieties, names, customs and histories of this gender complexity continue today through still-existing Indigenous peoples, cultures and nations.

But, as Armsby noted in their Facebook comments, within the U.S. and elsewhere that class patriarchy has trampled, the struggle for that complexity "for many trans people, especially trans women of color — amounts to a life and death struggle for correct pronouns, for bathrooms and for whatever resources and measures [that] trans, non-binary and Two-Spirit folk believe are worth fighting for."

The "external forces" at work in the U.S. have produced oppressive, narrow concepts of "man" and "woman" as public goals — to create colonial settlers, soldiers for imperialism and malleable workers.

It was no accident that, at the beginning of the 20th century, as the U.S. began

to invade and occupy nations beyond its continental borders, President Teddy Roosevelt campaigned to "toughen up" young boys into "manly men." As historian Sarah Watts notes, he wanted men in the imperialist United States to be "the true inheritors of the cowboy tradition of white, aggressive, armed, nationalist manhood." (tinyurl.com/y4g3rxo7)

Trans lives give all of us the vision and hope of a world that rejects rigid, dominating and harmful ideas about masculine and feminine, male and female. As trans warrior, historian and activist Leslie Feinberg once said: "People of all sexes have the right to explore femininity, masculinity and the infinite variations between — without criticism or ridicule."

Feinberg also knew that a socialist future offered the only possibility of a world where trans people, and all people, could live fully in their own beautiful, unique sex and gender complexity. Workers World comrade Feinberg died in 2014 with these last words: "Remember me as a revolutionary communist."

In an early pamphlet, "Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come," Feinberg wrote: "Like racism



WW PHOTO: MIKE EILINFELDT

Trans activist Leslie Feinberg dancing in Cuba, 2007.

and all forms of prejudice, bigotry against transgender people is a deadly carcinogen. [As workers] we are pitted against each other in order to keep us from seeing each other as allies. Genuine bonds of solidarity can be forged between people who respect each other's differences and are willing to fight their enemy together. We are the class that does the work of the world, and can revolutionize it. We can win true liberation." □



Mumia Abu-Jamal on massacre at Christchurch, New Zealand

Taken from a March 16, 2019, audio column posted on prisonradio.com.

Livestream, a young Aussie killer invades a set of Muslim mosques and commits a massacre of men, women and even children.

The man publishes a maniacal manuscript decrying Muslim "invaders" of Europe, while slaughtering Muslims at prayer and in meditation.

Online, millions viewed this carnage live as it happened in Christchurch, a city in New Zealand.

The author of this horror was reportedly a "white nationalist" who expressed opposition to Muslim immigrants.

New Zealand, a nation mostly composed of two islands in the South East Pacific Ocean, is mostly white people from Britain,

who number in the millions. The Maori, Indigenous people who are of Polynesian ancestry, have lived there for at least 500 years before European arrival, with the 18th century exploration of British Captain James Cook.

As a result of European/Maori warfare, the Maori were reduced to less than 100,000 souls around the time of the U.S. Civil War.

Today, there are perhaps

200,000 Maori survivors. So who are the invaders?

New Zealand now has a population of about 4.5 million, 71 percent of which is of European ancestry.

Kinda makes you wonder: Who invaded whom?

At last count, some 50 Muslims were slain, and an Australian man in his 20s is charged in connection with what we call the Christchurch Massacre. □

Law students protest award for Puerto Rican 'junta' member

By Betsey Piette

Over 60 students and alumni of Penn Law School have released a collective statement condemning Professor David Skeel Jr. as the recipient of the 2019 Beacon Award. Skeel is cited for his service on Puerto Rico's Financial Oversight and Management Board, also known as the Fiscal Control Board. The annual award recognizes "exemplary commitment" to pro bono work by a Penn Law faculty member.

The March 27 statement makes clear that the FCB, known by the people of Puerto Rico as "la junta," is an anti-democratic regime defending the interests of the profit-making financial sector at the expense of the life and health of the Puerto Rican people.

The statement opposing Skeel states: "Because of the Board, Puerto Rican workers have lost benefits, including sick leave and vacation pay, and hundreds of their public schools have been shuttered to pay debts to Wall Street banks. San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz has called the Board 'an exercise of raw colonialism.' Gov. Ricardo Rosselló accused the FCB of trying to 'impose measures that negatively affect the quality of life of our people.'"

The students and alumni emphasize: "The Board serves the banks, not the people. We strongly urge the Toll Public Interest Center Advisory Board to reconsider their choice."

This is not the first time that David

Skeel Jr., who teaches bankruptcy law in Philadelphia, has been targeted for participation in la junta. Over the summer and fall of 2018 "wanted posters" appeared around the Penn campus bearing Skeel's photograph. These labeled him a "mercenary who demands the blood of Puerto Rican people to pay rich Wall Street bondholders."

Demonstrations were held at the Penn campus to focus on the role of Skeel and Philadelphia native Julia Keleher in the theft of Puerto Rican resources. Keleher was paid \$250,000 by the FCB to serve as Puerto Rico's "Education Secretary" despite her lack of education experience.

In an Wall Street Journal op-ed on Sept. 13, 2018, Skeel objected to the posters, pointing out that PROMESA — the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act signed into law by President Obama in 2016 — instructed the oversight board to "achieve fiscal responsibility and access to the capital markets."

Skeel's work for Wall Street started long before that act was signed. In a 2014 WSJ article, he argued for management of the debt crisis in Puerto Rico as a test case for attacking workers' rights. He cited parallels to U.S. states facing similar hardships, such as Illinois, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and cities like Philadelphia.

In the article Skeel pointed out that, unlike local officials reluctant to make drastic cuts because they are subject to reelections, a board appointed by congressional mandate could get away with

attacking public employee unions and cutting programs, jobs and benefits.

In his words as an advocate for "capital markets": "There may be a silver lining in these financial clouds."

All-out class war on workers and poor

Who got to line their pockets with silver obtained through the "restructuring" of Puerto Rico's debt? Members of the FCB, appointed by the U.S. president and chosen by leaders of the House and Senate, were given broad powers to serve the interest of the bondholders, with no accountability to the people of Puerto Rico.

The FCB's powers included instituting automatic hiring freezes and reducing the minimum hourly wage of workers under 25 years old from \$7.25 to \$4.25.

The resulting layoffs, cuts in basic services and increases in the cost of living exacerbate hunger and poverty on the island, which continue to worsen nearly two years after Hurricane Maria. Foreclosures of mortgages on homes and repossessions of automobiles have become widespread.

Under the pretext of "stimulating the economy," the Law of Transformation and Labor Flexibilization of 2017 stripped workers of hard-won gains, including the 8-hour day. This law cut wages, vacation and sick days, reduced bonuses and extended workers' probation periods.

The 2017 Single Employer Law impacted public sector workers by defining the government as a single employer



that could move workers from one agency to another at will, even to the private sector. Workers who are moved face the loss of protections won under collective bargaining agreements, including seniority.

In addition to draconian attacks on workers' rights, the FCB also imposed taxes and increases in fines and tolls across the board, while cutting municipal subsidies and allocations for art, culture and sports programs and programs protecting women. Other FCB cuts included \$1 billion from health care, a 10 percent reduction in pensions, and more than \$600 million from the budget of the University of Puerto Rico.

There is clearly nothing "exemplary" or "pro bono" — "for the good" — about the mercenary job Skeel is doing on Puerto Rico. □

U.S. capitalism’s dilemma over China

By Deirdre Griswold

In the 1930s, a U.S. merchant named Carl Crow, who ran the first Western advertising agency in China for 25 years, wrote a book about China entitled “400 Million Customers.” That about summed up how the U.S. bourgeoisie looked at China at that time.

How could they make money off of the hundreds of millions of Chinese people? That was their main interest.

And it hasn’t changed.

Here’s a headline from CNBC News of April 1 this year: “Dow rises 200 to start off the quarter on strong U.S. and China data, trade progress.”

During the previous week, the Dow had gone up and down by hundreds of points each day as the news gyrated over whether or not there was progress in trade talks between the two countries.

Of course, the big difference between China in Crow’s time and now is that a tremendous social upheaval there changed everything. The millennia-old stranglehold of the landlords over the peasants followed by the growth in the 19th century of a ruling class of bankers, merchants and manufacturers tied to world imperialism was upended in

1949 by a socialist revolution, led by the Communist Party of China and based in both the workers and the peasants.

In the nearly 70 years since then, China has grown from the 400 million “customers” of the 1930s to a population of 1.4 billion — over four times that of the U.S. today. That’s a lot of people to feed, but famine in China is a thing of the past, because the country has also gone from being one of the poorest in the world to the largest exporter of goods and the second-largest global economy. With a 6 percent annual growth rate, China is on track to surpass the U.S. in a few years.

On the horns of a dilemma

The capitalist ruling class in the U.S. is on the horns of a dilemma. They want, and need, the 1.4 billion “customers” now in China. U.S. agribusiness in particular has become dependent on selling a lot of wheat, soybeans, corn and other foods to China. Which China needs, because it covers a land area the same size as the U.S., but with four times the number of mouths to feed.

At the same time, the U.S. ruling class hates the control over China’s economy exerted by the 90-million-member Communist Party.

That control explains how China has been able to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. According to the World Bank, more than 500 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty in China as the rate fell from 88 percent in 1981 to 6.5 percent in 2012.

That trend has continued. As of 2018 the number of people living below the national poverty line was about 2 percent of the population. China expects to totally eradicate poverty by 2020.

This has earth-shaking significance; yet it is rarely acknowledged by the mass media here.

The U.S. ruling class hates the Communist Party of China for maintaining control over its economy and not totally “opening up” China to foreign investors, who want free rein to come and exploit its labor and resources. The political representatives of the billionaires here make endless complaints about it. But at the same time, the U.S. ruling class has come to depend on all these new “customers” who now can actually buy things the U.S. owners of capital need to sell.

Here’s how the April 2 New York Times, the “liberal” paper of Wall Street, sees it: “At the heart of President Trump’s negotiations with China is a troubling

contradiction: The United States wants to use the trade talks to encourage the country to adopt a more market-oriented economy. But a key element of a prospective deal may end up reinforcing the economic power of the Chinese state.

“Negotiators are still working out deal terms, but any agreement seems certain to involve China’s promise to purchase hundreds of billions of dollars of American goods. For Mr. Trump, this is an essential element that will help reduce the United States’ record trade deficit with China and bolster farmers and other constituencies hurt by his trade war.

“But those purchases will be ordered by the Chinese state, and most will be carried out by state-controlled Chinese businesses, further cementing Beijing’s role in managing its economy and potentially making United States industries even more beholden to the Chinese.”

Of course, the people of China are more than customers. These days, they are also astronauts, city planners, high-speed train engineers and innovators of new technology. And they have shown the world what public ownership and a planned economy can accomplish — even one that has made many concessions to private capital in order to develop. □

Did Boeing’s choices kill 346 airline passengers?

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

Boeing Airlines, which has been raking in profits, is scrambling after having two crashes of its 737 Max 8 passenger jet, killing a total of 346 people in the last five months.

The Indonesian Lion Air jet went down in the Java Sea Oct. 29, 2018, killing all 189 passengers. The Ethiopian Airlines crash at Addis Ababa on March 10 ended in the death of all 157 on board.

Now Boeing is involved in a public relations fiasco. Why? To keep its monopoly position as a worldwide aircraft producer — a position backed up with orders for 4,783 of the 737 Max jets — Boeing made profit-driven decisions that undermined basic passenger safety.

In January Boeing CEO Dennis Muilenburg announced the company made \$10.5 billion in profit in 2018 and had a record \$100 billion in sales. Boeing also took over Brazilian plane maker Embraer in February. Boeing bought 80 percent of the commercial unit of Embraer for \$5.6 billion — considered a conquest for U.S. imperialism.

Muilenburg announced that the Renton, Wash., factory of 12,000 workers would raise production of 737 Mx planes from the already breakneck speed of 52 a month to 57 a month.

But that doesn't seem so likely anymore.

Treacherous software

Boeing had installed a new software system — Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System — in the 737 Max to avoid stalls shortly after takeoff. A

stall can occur if the plane is rising too quickly at a steep angle. To counteract the jet’s powerful engines just after takeoff, MCAS forces the nose of the plane to dip. That can trigger a steep dive if the MCAS continues to force the nose down, as happened in the Lion Air crash.

Investigators believe that faulty data from sensors on the Lion Air plane might have caused the system to fail.

According to Aviation Week and the Daily Beast, the MCAS system operated without any input or knowledge from pilots. It wasn't even in the pilots’ manuals. Intervention from pilots can keep the plane under control, but the pilot has to understand the MCAS system and how to counteract it in an emergency.

Just after the Lion Air crash, which exposed the issue of MCAS, the Allied Pilots Association put out a statement: "This is the first description you, as 737 pilots have seen (of the MCAS system). It is not in the AA737 Flight Manual Part 2, nor is there a description in the Boeing FCOM (Flight Crew Operations Manual). It will be there soon." (Daily Beast, Nov. 13)

It took until the March 10 Ethiopian Airlines crash to get 370 other 737 Max planes, which were still flying, grounded. The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration resisted the rest of the world until it finally grounded the 737 Max on March 13.

The Ethiopian Airlines 737 Max jet crash, which has not been fully investigated, appears to have experienced a similar scenario, based so far on flight data.

Safety features ‘optional’

As the pilots of the Ethiopian and Indonesian airlines struggled to get control

of their doomed airplanes, they lacked two basic safety features from the MCAS system. That's because Boeing had listed them as optional features requiring extra payment. Regulators didn't require them, so the two low-cost airlines didn't order them.

These two features are the angle of attack indicator and the disagree lite, both optional features said to be critical, but not installed without extra payment. Boeing makes from \$800,000 to \$2 million per plane on optional features in the 737 Max, which explains why management wanted these features to require extra payments.

In another attempt to keep its costs down, Boeing pressured families of Lion Air's deceased passengers into signing a form for compensation just after the crash. The families were herded into a conference room and handed a complex form which included a pledge not to sue Lion Air. They were told that by signing the form they would receive \$91,600 in compensation.

While this sum was welcomed by some who lost breadwinners, it was the minimum allowed under Indonesian law. The document included a huge list of contractors for Boeing, who the relatives could also not sue if they were going to collect the \$91,600. This document is now said to be illegal.

More than 20 relatives of those who died on the plane are suing Boeing in the U.S. for negligence.

How did Boeing get away with such a blatantly unsafe feature as MCAS? The government regulatory agency, the FAA, said Boeing could regulate itself. That’s even written into law. The Organization

Designation Authorization Program was established by the FAA in 2005. The ODAP allows aspects of the certification process to be performed by the plane makers.

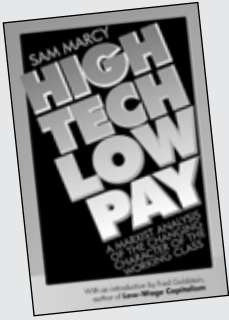
The FAA reauthorization bills of 2012 and 2018 supposedly make safety reviews quicker and less costly. According to Sen. Richard Blumenthal, however, this "left the fox guarding the hen house."

Patrick Shanahan, who had a long executive career at Boeing, is now Secretary of Defense. He is a warmonger who appears to be highly favored by the Trump administration. Talk about a cozy relationship. Boeing's Political Action Committee kicked in \$5.9 million to federal candidates in the 2018 election cycle. The company employed 98 lobbyists last year and spread money to 375 members of Congress.

Some airlines are talking about canceling their orders for Boeing Max planes. On March 25, China put in an order for 300 planes from Airbus, Boeing’s competitor, in a \$35 billion deal. This is seen as a big move away from Boeing.

Airlines are saying they'll have huge losses as a result of grounding the Boeing Max. Financial analysts predict it will be two-to-three months before the 737 Max will get back into service. Boeing will have to find a fix for the plane, and air safely regulators from around the world will have to approve the fix.

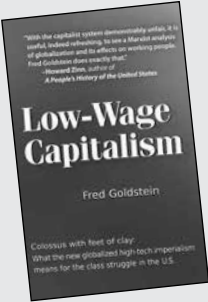
Despite all Boeing's wealth and power and their appropriation of skilled mechanics and engineers' labor, the company is having a breakdown in its safety record and how to address it. It's too much in a hurry in its mad quest for profits to satisfy its ruling-class investors. □



High Tech, Low Pay

A Marxist Analysis of the Changing Character of the Working Class

By Sam Marcy with an updated introduction by Fred Goldstein, author of *Low Wage Capitalism*.



Low-Wage Capitalism

Fred Goldstein



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PHOTO: TELESUR

En Washington marchan en repudio a las amenazas de guerra contra Venezuela y denuncian a la OTAN por agredir a países por su petróleo.

Venezuela

Comienzan acciones legales contra los golpistas

Por Sam Ordóñez

31 de marzo - Juan Guaidó, presidente de la Asamblea Nacional en desacato y autoproclamado presidente interino de Venezuela, ha sido inhabilitado para desempeñar cargos públicos durante 15 años. La inhabilitación es resultado de la aplicación de la Ley contra la Corrupción, y se aplicó debido a que Guaidó no declaró una serie de gastos en viajes y alojamientos.

El gasto total en viajes al extranjero, principalmente a Panamá, fue de más de 310 millones de bolívares (100 mil dólares), según el contralor general de la república bolivariana. Estos gastos, especialmente combinados con los gastos de alojamiento, sobrepasa lo razonable para el sueldo de un diputado de la Asamblea Nacional. Guaidó se ha negado a presentar su declaración jurada de patrimonio, por lo que se sospecha que ha recibido ilegalmente fondos de gobiernos extranjeros. (tinyurl.com/yxwku2ef)

Esta es la segunda acción directa que ha tomado el estado venezolano contra Juan Guaidó en relación con su participación en un golpe de estado. La primera fue prohibir la salida del país, orden que Guaidó desató cuando entró a Colombia días antes del 23 de febrero.

Ese día los golpistas de derecha intentaron quebrar la Fuerza Armada

Nacional Bolivariana y entrar camiones norteamericanas desde Colombia, pero fracasaron. Ahora, se están terminando las investigaciones abiertas cuando inició el intento de golpe de estado a finales de enero, y se están aplicando las penas constitucionalmente apropiadas a los golpistas.

La resistencia del pueblo venezolano y la unión cívico-militar ha podido frustrar los planes del imperialismo hasta ahora, por lo que los Estados Unidos ha recurrido a estrategias de sabotaje y bloqueo económico. El mes de marzo se registraron múltiples ataques cibernéticos, físicos, y de alta tecnología contra el sistema eléctrico del país, resultando en varios apagones.

¿Cual es la verdadera dictadura?

Uno de los ataques principales del imperialismo contra la revolución bolivariana ha sido el ataque comunicacional. Mediante medios de comunicación fieles al imperialismo, como CNN, New York Times, Fox, y otros, fabricaron la narrativa dominante en los países imperialistas. Según ellos Venezuela es una dictadura represiva y corrupta.

Estos medios de comunicación están intentando caracterizar la acciones contra Juan Guaidó como otro abuso dictatorial. Pero en realidad el gobierno venezolano ha actuado con el máximo

respeto a los derechos democráticos y constitucionales de los ciudadanos venezolanos cómplices con el golpe de estado.

Primero hay que revisar los hechos, porque es fácil perderlos cuando la narrativa imperialista nos viene de todos lados. Juan Guaidó era, constitucionalmente, el presidente de la Asamblea Nacional de Venezuela. Esa Asamblea Nacional está en desacato del Tribunal Supremo de Justicia desde el 29 de marzo 2017.

El día 23 de enero, Juan Guaidó se auto juramentó como “presidente interino” de Venezuela en una plaza pública. El presidente estadounidense Donald Trump lo reconoció como jefe de estado casi inmediatamente. Luego, el autoproclamado presidente, declaró sus intenciones de ingresar camiones de una agencia del estado norteamericano sin el permiso de ninguna institución legítima del gobierno venezolano.

El famoso día 23 de febrero, Guaidó y otros legisladores opositores dirigieron una serie de ataques violentos desde Colombia contra la frontera venezolana. Al otro lado estaban las fuerzas armadas del estado venezolano y los colectivos, que son organizaciones comunitarias progubernamentales. Terminaron, como semanas después tuvo que admitir el New York Times, quemando sus propios camiones para intentar culpar a las

fuerzas bolivarianas.

¿Cómo debería responder un gobierno democrático y soberano ante un intento tan abierto y descarado de derrocar el gobierno? Son actos de traición, y además no sólo son para el beneficio propio, sino que para entregar el país al imperio norteamericano.

La respuesta de la justicia venezolana ha sido una serie de investigaciones por delitos concretos y con pruebas recolectadas durante meses. La constitución venezolana garantiza los derechos de todos los ciudadanos, incluso cuando están llevando a cabo un golpe de estado.

En los países “democráticos,” según el imperialismo, de américa latina que forman el Grupo de Lima se asesinan a los líderes sociales sólo por oponerse a las políticas neoliberales. En Colombia, por ejemplo, se registraron 120 muertes de líderes sociales en los primeros 100 días de la presidencia del actual mandatario Ivan Duque (tinyurl.com/ya6mq5q).

En todo 2018 fueron asesinados 172 líderes en Colombia, según la Defensoría del Pueblo. LA Defensoría también indicó que la cifra había subido desde que se firmaron los acuerdos de paz (tinyurl.com/y3ar8csp).

En Estados Unidos, detienen a niños en campos de concentración porque sus madres cruzaron la frontera y han criminalizado a las comunidades negras. □

Editorial

El cambio climático está impulsando el cambio social

Las terribles noticias sobre el despliegue del cambio climático pueden tener efectos opuestos en las personas: desesperación, lasitud y negación, o energía de ira.

Las filas de aquellos en este país que creen las mentiras, promovidos por la industria petroleras y repetidos por políticos oportunistas como Trump, que niegan el cambio climático se están reduciendo a la vez que las prueba se hacen más contundentes. A veces golpea a sus propias puertas, ya sean tormentas feroces o incendios forestales o inundaciones.

Los jóvenes en particular, para quienes el futuro es una gran parte de sus propias vidas, están impulsando el movimiento exigiendo que los gobiernos y las empresas tomen medidas significativas para dar vuelta a lo que parece un deslizamiento imparable en el caos climático.

Y cada vez más, las personas en este movimiento apuntan al capitalismo como el problema y al socialismo como la respuesta. Ya es hora, y todavía hay tiempo.

¿Qué puede provocar el cambio?

Durante el último siglo y medio, un período en el que la industrialización del planeta provocó enormes cantidades de gases de efecto invernadero que se acumulan en la atmósfera como una gran manta que calienta la Tierra, hemos visto a personas organizarse y hacer lo que parecía imposible cuando están convencidos de que sus intereses colectivos superan sus propias necesidades y deseos personales. Trágicamente, esta capacidad de sacrificio y lucha ha sido utilizada por las clases dominantes del mundo imperialista, que han adoctrinado a cientos de millones de personas para luchar y morir "por su país".

De hecho, las guerras mundiales del siglo XX, así como las “acciones policiales” devastadoras, como Vietnam y Corea, fueron impulsadas no por sentimientos nobles

de democracia y libertad, sino por la feroz necesidad de mercados y ganancias incorporadas en el sistema capitalista.

Aprender lo contrario, como lo han hecho muchos soldados que se vieron obligados a entrar en la guerra de Vietnam y ahora visitan amistosamente a ese país socialista, es una experiencia devastadora pero necesaria.

En las últimas décadas, cuando los gobiernos capitalistas piden más sacrificios a las personas, el cinismo ha reemplazado al entusiasmo. Y comprensiblemente así. Pero el cinismo es la ausencia de creencia o convicción.

Es lo que haces, no lo que te burlas y no haces, lo que cambia la marea de la historia.

Un movimiento anticapitalista se está desarrollando en todo el mundo en respuesta a los crímenes del imperialismo. Uno de sus temas urgentes es el cambio climático. ¿Se puede hacer lo suficiente para detener el calentamiento global antes de que se alcance el "punto de inflexión" que, según advierten los científicos, lo haría irreversible?

Obviamente, esto llevará a la movilización masiva a gran escala. Se requerirá una reestructuración cuidadosa y organizada de la forma en que vivimos, trabajamos y disfrutamos de la vida. Dicha reestructuración está completamente en desacuerdo con un sistema económico impulsado por las ganancias.

Uniando las fuerzas para el socialismo

La clase trabajadora tiene potencialmente el poder y la organización para paralizar el capitalismo, derribar su estado represivo y movilizarse para que la reconstrucción socialista planificada de la sociedad beneficie a los productores, no a los explotadores.

Y necesita aliados entre aquellas personas que no son explotadas directamente en el punto de producción

pero que sufren del capitalismo de cualquier otra manera. La lucha por un sistema sostenible, el socialismo, puede unir estas fuerzas de clase.

En este momento, la mayor energía para el cambio social proviene de las personas más explotadas y oprimidas por este sistema. Son los pueblos de África, América Central, América del Sur y el Caribe, gran parte de Asia occidental y oriental y el Pacífico, los que menos han contribuido al calentamiento global, pero son los que más sufren las consecuencias.

El reciente ciclón que golpeó a Mozambique, Zimbabwe y Malawi, matando a más de 600 personas como mínimo y devastando a cientos de miles, es un buen ejemplo. Así es la devastación del huracán de Puerto Rico que continúa. Pero también debemos incluir las inundaciones masivas en el medio oeste de los EE. UU., donde los más afectados son siempre los pobres, que carecen de un refugio adecuado y no pueden pagar un seguro contra inundaciones.

La desesperación no nos llevará a ningún lado. La única respuesta efectiva al calentamiento global es luchar fuertemente por el poder de los trabajadores y el socialismo. □



El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida

Fred Goldstein utiliza las leyes de la acumulación capitalista de Marx, y la tasa decreciente de ganancia, para demostrar por qué el capitalismo global ha llegado finalmente a un punto de inflexión.

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